

AT WATER'S EDGE

COLLABORATING FOR OVER 30 YEARS, JLF ARCHITECTS AND VERDONE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS HAVE MADE FLOWING WATER AN ART FORM

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PHOTOS **AUDREY HALL**

A Wyoming project carries water to a destination pavilion, explains JLF's Paul Bertelli. "Jim Verdone designed a beautiful dam; the water trickles down from constructed to natural, becoming increasingly integrated into the natural landscape." >>



The history of the West is inextricably linked to water—through the dams, canals and viaducts that made cities possible, to windmills and wells that allowed homesteaders to feed their livestock. Water represents romance: rafting down canyons, skiing the steep slopes or fishing the storied streams of the Rockies. Where there's water in this arid land, there's life. It's no surprise, then, that the proximity of water to residences brings beauty and wellness to those who inhabit them.

Two leading design firms have honed their working relationship over three decades, with some of their most

creative and impactful collaborations manifesting in water features in residences throughout the Rocky Mountain West. JLF Architects' contemporary rustic homes, each uniquely inspired by setting, lend themselves to the profoundly original but always appropriate waterscapes devised by Verdone Landscape Architects. >>

JLF, Verdone and Big-D Signature transformed a Park City home, creating multiple outdoor "rooms," two fire pits and a pool tucked behind a low wall and fountain that defines the entertaining space.

“Humans live on the landscape, so how do you make that transition without it being a pastiche but instead really beautiful? How do you seamlessly integrate the built environment with the natural environment at that edge that’s created by what we do?” says JLF founding partner Paul Bertelli. “You bring the grasses up to the building so it looks as though the house grew out of the landscape. That’s the overarching paradigm, and without our partnership, (the homes) wouldn’t be so elegant, so well executed or so extraordinarily accomplished.”

An 1890s stone creamery rebuilt as a home in Jackson, Wyoming, engages with water in a variety of ways, most notably in a separate boathouse where a stone deck became a platform for observing wildlife drawn to the pond and the Tetons rising beyond a waterfall. Another Jackson house was designed in concert with a pond feeding into a stream that runs through the property. The hot tub is tucked up >>

JLF’s Park City Modern project combines glass, steel, timber and stone with multiple water features, including a waterfall inspired by a mining sluice that flows under the dining room.



PHOTO LUCY CALL

Incorporating water, says Verdone, “educates people in their everyday life about water in the West. It’s an educational process. We talk about water so they understand, appreciate and respect it.” >>





against the built environment, backed by cascading water and looking over a meditative reflecting pond.

Two projects in Park City, Utah, take the integration of architecture with landscape even further. In their Park City Revival project, JLF transformed a dated, overbuilt log structure into a human-scale, art-filled home while dramatically expanding its potential for outdoor living. Verdone thinned trees to create more space and light, then used the natural slope to hide a pool behind a wood-plank wall punctuated with spillways, defining the outdoor

entertaining space while introducing flowing water.

Park City Modern's reflecting pools lined with rocks and bisected by a walkway of sandstone slabs create a dramatic arrival sequence. The dining room, a glass-walled connector, hovers over a pond filled by water flowing down from a mining-slucce-style waterfall. >>

JLF and Verdone worked together to keep the pool close to the home but hidden from view from the main gathering areas. The meadow-like landscaping comes right to the edge of the designed environment.

“Our approach is to make these outdoor spaces inviting and interesting and let them act as viewing platforms for native landscape,” says Jim Verdone. “Our landscape is so dramatic and comprised of a broad sweep of simple textures, so we’ve always taken a less-is-more approach. We got away from a manicured look and use materials that age on their own and reflect the cultural heritage of the West.”

In the end, integrating water elements with architecture is about partnership based on mutual respect, creativity and a shared vision. In the case of JLF and Verdone’s collaborations, says Bertelli, “There’s a really good process in place. It starts with a site walk with the clients,

then we come up with four or five ideas of how the house might sit on the site and how the rooms might relate to each other. We’ve worked with Jim Verdone for 30 years; there was immediate respect (on either side) for what each of us do. I trust that he understands the architecture, and he trusts that we’re going to let him design, sometimes even inside the building, because of a good idea. It is the essence of collaboration.” ○

The integration of regionally appropriate materials and naturalistic landscape treatment is key to the success of the designs. The sight and sound of flowing water carries its own benefits, including mental clarity and oneness with nature.

jlfarchitects.com, verdonelandarch.com

